

EXHIBIT 1DATE 1/20/09HB 226

TO: House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Bob Vogel, Director of Governmental Relations  
Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) *Bob Vogel*RE: HB 226 – Board of Crime Control to Sustain Prevention and After-school  
Programs for At-Risk Youth

DATE: January 20, 2009

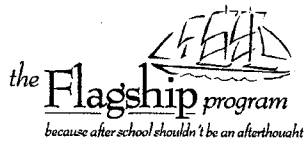
The Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) would like to thank the sponsor, Rep. Elsie Arntzen, for bringing HB 226 forward that will allow the important work from this biennium related to after school programs for at-risk students to continue into the next biennium.

The MTSBA and our members have been directly involved in after school program development because of the benefits to students, parents, and communities. These benefits include:

1. **Afterschool programs keep kids safe.** Between 3 and 6 p.m., Montana children and youth are three times more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, be in or cause a car crash and engage in sexual activity. It's a fact that afterschool programs reduce risky behavior by engaging students in meaningful activities.
2. **National research shows that every dollar invested in afterschool produces a savings of \$3 in reduced juvenile justice costs.** Havre, for example, has seen a dramatic reduction in juvenile crime since opening its Boys & Girls Club.
3. **Afterschool programs turn risk into opportunity.** Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montana and Montana 4H programs report that their participants are 46% less likely to use drugs or engage in risky behavior than peers who are not involved in mentoring or youth development programs after school.
4. **Afterschool programs inspire learning by providing Montana students with additional academic supports they need to succeed.** Regular attendees of the Montana 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center afterschool programs show a 53% improvement in reading scores and 52% in math. In addition, teachers reported significant improvement in behavior such as turning homework in on time, class participation, motivation to learn, and getting along well with other students.

The support for after school programs through the Board of Crime Control is a very important part of helping Montana's communities maintain services for at-risk youth. As you can see above, this very modest program carries significant benefits not only for youth, but also for their parents, and their communities.

We hope you will give HB 226 a Do Pass.



A Program of Western  
Montana Addiction Services

Hawthorne Elementary School ♦ Franklin Elementary School ♦ Lowell Elementary School  
C. S. Porter Middle School ♦ Meadow Hill Middle School ♦ Washington Middle School  
Big Sky High School ♦ Hellgate High School ♦ Seeley-Swan High School  
Willard Alternative High School ♦ Sentinel High School

1325 Wyoming St. ♦ Missoula, MT 59801 ♦ Phone: (406) 532-9827 or (406) 532-9825  
Fax: (406) 541-3032 ♦ E-mail: rbuzzas@wmmhc.org ♦ Website: www.flagshipprogram.org

January 20, 2009

Chairman Jon Sesso and  
Members of the House Appropriations Committee  
Capitol Building  
Helena, MT 59620

EXHIBIT 1  
DATE 1/20/09  
HB 226

RE: Testimony in favor of HB 226

Dear Chairman Sesso and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

Regrettably, I am unable to be in Helena to testify in person as a proponent of HB226, a bill that is administered by the Montana Board of Crime Control to fund After-School programming to help reduce underage alcohol and other drug use and violence among Montana's young people.

The Flagship Program has been one of the recipients of some of these dollars that were funded by the Legislature in 2007 on a one-time-only basis. Even though the request is not a large amount of money, it goes a long ways in helping programs such as ours around the state, to deal with the challenges high-risk behaviors among youth, such as underage drug use. Montana is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation for its incidence of underage alcohol use. As we know from research, alcohol is related to many other youth and family problems such as other drug use, violence, school failure, teen pregnancy, drinking and driving accidents, family conflict, depression and suicide. Research also tells us that the hours of 3-6 pm are when most high-risk behaviors occur with our young people. Current brain research shows that alcohol has a particularly bad effect on the developing adolescent brain in terms of weakening their ability to concentrate and retain information, impair judgement - leading to risky decision making and contributes to lifelong health problems. Youth who begin drinking before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to become addicted to alcohol as adults. The costs to our state are tremendous, not only in money spent on treatment and rehabilitation, but also in human terms.

The Flagship Program is an after-school prevention that has been in existence since 1995. It is a community-school partnership whose mission is to enhance the social, academic and cultural achievement of Missoula's youth by creating opportunities that help them be successful in school and grow to be productive and contributing adults. Last year, Flagship served (in its 10 K-12 partner schools) nearly 7,000 youth in 654 skill-building activities, free of charge to participants and their families. During that same period, 955 volunteers donated 10,380 hours of their time to teach or help with activities.

According to our own internal database, involvement in two national studies, and trend data from the YRBS (Youth Risk and Behavior Survey) and MPNA (Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey), we are showing steady decreases in alcohol and other substance use and risk behaviors through use of best practices, proven effective in over 40 years of prevention research. MPNA data (which surveys 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders every two years) shows that underage use of alcohol has shown as steady decrease between 2002 and 2008. Specifically, our 12<sup>th</sup> grade rates have decreased from 61% to 56%, 10<sup>th</sup> graders from 53% to 46% and 8<sup>th</sup> graders from 32% to 20%. We know we have a long ways to go, but we are seeing steady progress in our work with other local agencies who comprise our Missoula prevention coalition - The Missoula Forum for Children & Youth. We are also seeing the age of onset of use go up; meaning youth are initiating use at a later age, thus

Friends of Flagship Advisory Board

Dick Shull ♦ Macrae Peeples ♦ Don Simmons ♦ John Engen ♦ Molly Galusha ♦ Pat Simmons ♦ Cara Simkins  
Mark Ward ♦ Paulette Ferguson ♦ Kraig Michels ♦ Kelly Williams ♦ Judy Wing ♦ Peg Shea ♦ Kristin Smith



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reducing chances of addiction. Our statistics show increased “protective” factors as well including stronger attachment to school and community, as well as peers and positive adult relationships – all of which help protect against risk factors as youth progress from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

The dollars generated from HB 226 are relatively small per program, but of major importance as a “piece of our funding pie” to keep programs like Flagship going across the state. The cost of serving one youth in our program for a year is \$115. We think that’s a pretty good investment in our youth and we hope that you agree by voting in favor of HB 226.

With the current state of our economy, after-school programs are even more critical to working families as a safe and productive environment for their children during those high-risk after-school hours, when they may otherwise be at home without adult supervision. The allocation for this bill would enable expansion of existing services statewide. Please take this under consideration as you face the difficult choices you must make in the coming months on where to place limited state resources to benefit the most people in an accountable way.

We appreciate Representative Elsie Arntzen’s willingness to sponsor HB 226 and hope you will keep it going through the Legislative process by passing it out of committee to the House floor for consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Rosie Buzzas, Director  
The Flagship Program and  
Director of Prevention Services  
Western Montana Addiction Services

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**THE MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL  
HB 677 AFTERSCHOOL GRANT REPORT  
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2008**

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### Montana Afterschool Snapshot

In 2007 Representative Elsie Arntzen introduced House Bill 677 to the Montana legislature. HB 677 appropriated \$250,000 from the general fund to the Montana Board of Crime Control effective July 1, 2007, for the biennium ending June 30, 2009, to provide grants to sustain funding for existing prevention and after-school programs for at-risk youth. Each program funded delivered quality afterschool experiences based on best practices; programs implemented positive youth development strategies and developed partnerships in the community to create sustainability plans and foster stronger adult and youth engagement. Output measures included the number of youth served, the number of collaborations developed, reported changes in student grade point averages, and the level of satisfaction among youth and families.

Consider the following facts related to Montana's afterschool environment:

- The population of Montana is 957,861; the number of children in grades pre-K through grade eight is 96,810, or 9.8% of the population (Montana by the Numbers, Census and Economic Information Center, 2008) ;
- Montana has 432 total school districts and 830 total schools (OPI, 2008);
- Total Montana public school enrollment for the 2007-08 school year was 143,405 (OPI, 2008);
- Twenty-six percent (26%) of Montana's children live in single-parent families (Kids Count, 2008);
- According to the 2006 census estimates, 70% of Montana's elementary school students live in working parent households (Kids Count, 2008);

- The 2005-06 Montana Afterschool Service Capacity survey indicates that nearly one in five Montana children ages 6 to 12 with working parents attend afterschool programs;
- Sixty percent (60%) of parents say they missed less work when their child was in an afterschool program (Afterschool Alliance, October 2003);
- Over one third (34.5%) of Montana's students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (USDPHHS Administration for Children and Families, 2005);
- Over 18% of Montana children ages 5 – 17 live in poverty (State Afterschool Profiles, 2008).

#### The Importance of Afterschool Programs in Montana

Afterschool programs provide Montana children with a safe, enriching environment during the hours immediately after school. One third of Montana's heads of household is a single mother with children ages 18 and under (33.2%), and 64.9% of Montana families have both parents working outside the home. Between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. youth are at the greatest risk for engaging in juvenile crime and experimentation with tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and sex. The afterschool hours represent an opportunity to invest in Montana youth to ensure greater academic success, and higher educational achievement is one contributor to Montana's economic growth. In Montana, public schools and Boys and Girls Clubs are the largest providers of afterschool programs.

In *America After 3 PM*, a household survey on afterschool needs, Montana parents and guardians indicated that 24% of Montana's school-aged children take care of themselves after school and spend more than seven hours each week unsupervised during the after school hours. By contrast,

only 14% of Montana's school-aged children participate in afterschool programs. Those children who are in afterschool programs spend approximately six hours per week engaged in afterschool enrichment activities. Participants average 2.5 days per week at 2.2 hours per day. Other care arrangements include child care centers (22%), being cared for by siblings (12%), and non-parental adult care (11%). If an afterschool program were available in the community, 26% of the school-aged youth not currently enrolled would participate in an afterschool program, according to the survey.

Montana parents whose children are enrolled in afterschool programs primarily select the programs for child enjoyment, affordability, and safety of facilities and teachers. Eighty percent of Montana parents are extremely or somewhat satisfied with their children's afterschool program. The parents of non-participating youth believe that afterschool programming would benefit their children most by having fun, improving physical activity, providing greater access to technology, providing academic enrichment, and keeping the kids safe and out of trouble.

Afterschool programs benefit more than students and parents. In addition to keeping youth safe and enriching their academic experiences, afterschool programs mitigate decreased worker productivity related to afterschool care costs. According to a 2006 report by Brandeis University, decreased worker productivity can cost American businesses up to \$300 billion per year. Sixty percent of parents say they missed work less when their child was in an afterschool program (Afterschool Alliance, October 2003). Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country more than \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985). If the students who dropped out of the Class of 2008 had graduated, the nation's economy

would have benefited from an additional \$319 billion in income over their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, June 2008).

Federal funds for afterschool programming are diminishing. In 1998 the MBCC received \$518,318 through the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Governor's Grant. In 2008, the MBCC received \$284,670.

#### Identifying Montana's Afterschool Needs

Montana uses the Risk and Protective Factors model to determine prevention strategies focused toward "reducing youth problem behaviors." Two tools are used to determine prevention needs: the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment. Risk factors are those indicators that are known to predict increased likelihood of drug use, delinquency, school dropout, teen pregnancy, and violent behavior among youth. Protective factors mitigate the negative effects of those risk factors. Important protective factors include bonding to family, school, community and peers. Each of the afterschool programs emphasized developing protective factors and mitigating risk factors in the students.

#### Risk and Protective Factors in Montana Schools

Academic failure at the elementary school level and a lack of commitment to school are two risk factors that increase a student's risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, and violence. A third risk factor, favorable attitudes toward problem behavior, is linked to substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. Although



elementary school children usually express prosocial attitudes, those attitudes often change in middle school as students are influenced by peers who participate in risky behavior.

Not all youth who are exposed to multiple risk factors become substance abusers, juvenile delinquents, teen parents, or school dropouts. Risk factors are balanced by protective factors that reduce the impact of the risks or change the way a person responds to the risks. School opportunities for prosocial involvement and school rewards for prosocial involvement are protective factors that promote positive behavior, health, well-being, and personal success.

Quality afterschool programs reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for at-risk youth. Afterschool programs keep children safe and out of trouble because they meet family needs by providing responsible adult supervision of children during non-school hours. Quality afterschool programs also offer rewarding, challenging, and age-appropriate activities in a safe, structured, positive environment. Research has identified three major functions of afterschool programs. Quality afterschool programs provide supervision; offer enriching experiences and positive social interaction; and improve academic achievement (Fashola, 1999).

The following activities were delivered in the afterschool programs funded by this grant:

- Mentoring;
- Computer instruction;
- Homework assistance centers;
- College awareness and preparation;
- Employment preparation or training;

- Courses and enrichment activities in culture and the arts (includes creating a DVD, “Building a Sweat”);
- Volunteer and community service opportunities;
- Drug and violence prevention curricula and counseling;
- Language instruction, including English as a second language;
- Youth leadership activities (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, academic clubs); and
- Tutoring and supplementing instruction in basic skills, such as reading, math, and science.

Best Practice models implemented in the funded afterschool programs include The Flagship Program; Homework Zone; Project Northland; All Stars; SMART Leaders; Power Hour; and Keystone Club. Afterschool program directors partnered with the University of Montana (Environmental Health and Sciences); the Missoula YWCA; the Coalition Building Institute of Missoula; Women in Transition; the Missoula Humane Society; Missoula Parks and Recreation; the Montana Community Change Project; Montana State University – Northern (Media and Theater Arts); Montana State University – Billings (Out of School Time Task Force); the United Way; Salish-Kootenai College; Eagle Mount; and the US Forest Service.

#### Afterschool Grant Evaluation for School Year 2007-2008

A Request for Proposals for the afterschool funds was posted on the MBCC website in August 2007, and postcards were sent to Montana schools. Seventeen programs were considered for funding, and five programs were awarded. Recipients of the 2007-08 afterschool grant funds gathered data regarding grade point averages, attendance, disciplinary referrals, homework

completion rates, the number of students participating in the afterschool program, and partnerships within the community.

### *Grantees*

Subgrantees included Washington Middle School Flagship (Missoula); Havre HELP Committee and Boys and Girls Club; Friendship House of Christian Charity (Billings); Box Elder Schools; and Livingston LINKS. In its first year, the afterschool grant served 697 youth across Montana at a cost of approximately \$180 per child. Through satisfaction surveys, grade point average reports, and disciplinary referral reports, youth reported improvements in their decision-making abilities, "sense of self, core values, cultural competency, life skills, community involvement, and academic success as a result of participating in afterschool programs."

The Washington Middle School Flagship Program served 162 students. Student surveys indicated that 50% of student participants reported increased school involvement and 80% reported an increase in student participation in school. Student surveys also indicated an increase in homework completion. A decrease in friends who engage in problem behavior was reported by 89% of the program participants; absenteeism was reduced by 80%. Partnerships were formed and developed with the University of Montana, the Missoula YWCA, the Coalition Building Institute of Missoula, Women in Transition, Eagle Mount, and the Missoula Humane Society.

The Havre HELP Committee and Boys and Girls Club served 138 youth. Needs assessment was based on Hill County juvenile referral data, Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, and the Search Institute's Developmental Asset Survey administered in 2002 and 2006. An improved or static

grade point average was reported by 66% of the regular attendees, and all of the youth were satisfied with the afterschool program. The afterschool program uses materials provided by the Boys and Girls Club of America. One staff member received approximately 12 hours of training at the National Keystone Conference. Partnerships were formed and developed with the Montana Community Change Project, the MSU Media and Theater Arts department, and the Senior Center. An especially strong partnership with the Senior Center and the Club has resulted in activities taking place at both locations; seniors and teens attend dances together. Access to new opportunities for both seniors and teens is a direct result of the afterschool program.

The Friendship House of Christian Charity served 85 students, and 54% showed an improvement in their academic performances. Afterschool funds created 30 new program openings for youth. Improved prosocial behavior, including empathy, behavior management, self-confidence, positive self-image, and appropriate response to conflict, was reported by 72% of the program participants. Friendship House has 4 full-time and 26 part-time employees; all of them received 8 hours of staff training through the afterschool grant. Approximately five new lesson plans were developed as a result of afterschool grant funding. Partnerships were formed and developed with MSU-Billings and the Billings Out of School Time Task Force.

Box Elder Schools served 172 students in the afterschool program under the direction of 15 afterschool employees. The needs assessment was based on the number of discipline referrals, academic scores, free and reduced lunch eligibility, and high teacher turnover. The afterschool staff members train with the regular school staff during Pupil Instruction-Related (PIR) days; no new hours of training were provided with afterschool grant money. Two new programs were

created: Native American Dance and Native American Flute. A dozen new program openings for the high school cooking class were created. The grade point average for participating high school students increased from 2.09 to 2.39 throughout the school year. Discipline referrals were reduced by 21%, from 166 incidents per 344 students to 103 incidents per 378 students.

The Livingston LINKS program served 140 youth; grant funds created 30 new program openings. The needs assessment was based on a community needs assessment conducted in 1996 and the recent identification of risk and protective factors through Park County Communities That Care, funded through the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). Three staff members work less than full time; all 12 staff members received 8 hours of training with grant funds. One new program was created with grant funds, the high school tutoring program. Surveys indicated a 90% satisfaction rate for family and youth. Homework completion increased, according to teacher surveys. Livingston LINKS developed five MOUs and formed a partnership with the local United Way campaign. Two policies were amended: behavior guidelines and safety policies.

#### Year 1

The following school districts and agencies received afterschool grant funds for the 2007-08 school year:

#### Agency

#### County

Friendship House (Billings)

Yellowstone

Livingston School District

Park

Washington Middle School Flagship Program (Missoula)

Missoula

Box Elder Elementary and High Schools

Hill

Boys and Girls Club of Havre

Hill

### Year 2

A Request for Proposals for the afterschool funds was posted on the MBCC website in April 2008 and postcards were sent to Montana schools. Twenty-eight programs, including four of the continuation programs, were considered for funding; five programs were awarded. The 2008-09 subgrantees include Washington Middle School Flagship (Missoula); Donna's House (Anaconda); The Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne; St. Ignatius Schools; and the Boys and Girls Club of Lewistown. Washington Middle School's Flagship Program is the only continuation grant; the other four subgrantees are new applicants.

### ***Grantees***

Recipients of the 2008-09 afterschool grant funds have recently completed the first quarter of school and are gathering data regarding grade point averages, attendance, disciplinary referrals, homework completion rates, the number of students participating in the afterschool program, and partnerships within the community. Recipients of the 2007-08 afterschool grant funds continue to gather data and report their findings.

The following school districts and agencies received afterschool grant funds for the 2008-09 school year:

### Agency

### County

St. Ignatius School District (St. Ignatius)

Lake

Boys and Girls Club (Lewistown)

Fergus

Washington Middle School Flagship Program (Missoula)

Missoula

Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne (Lame Deer)

Rosebud

Donna's House (Anaconda)

Deer Lodge

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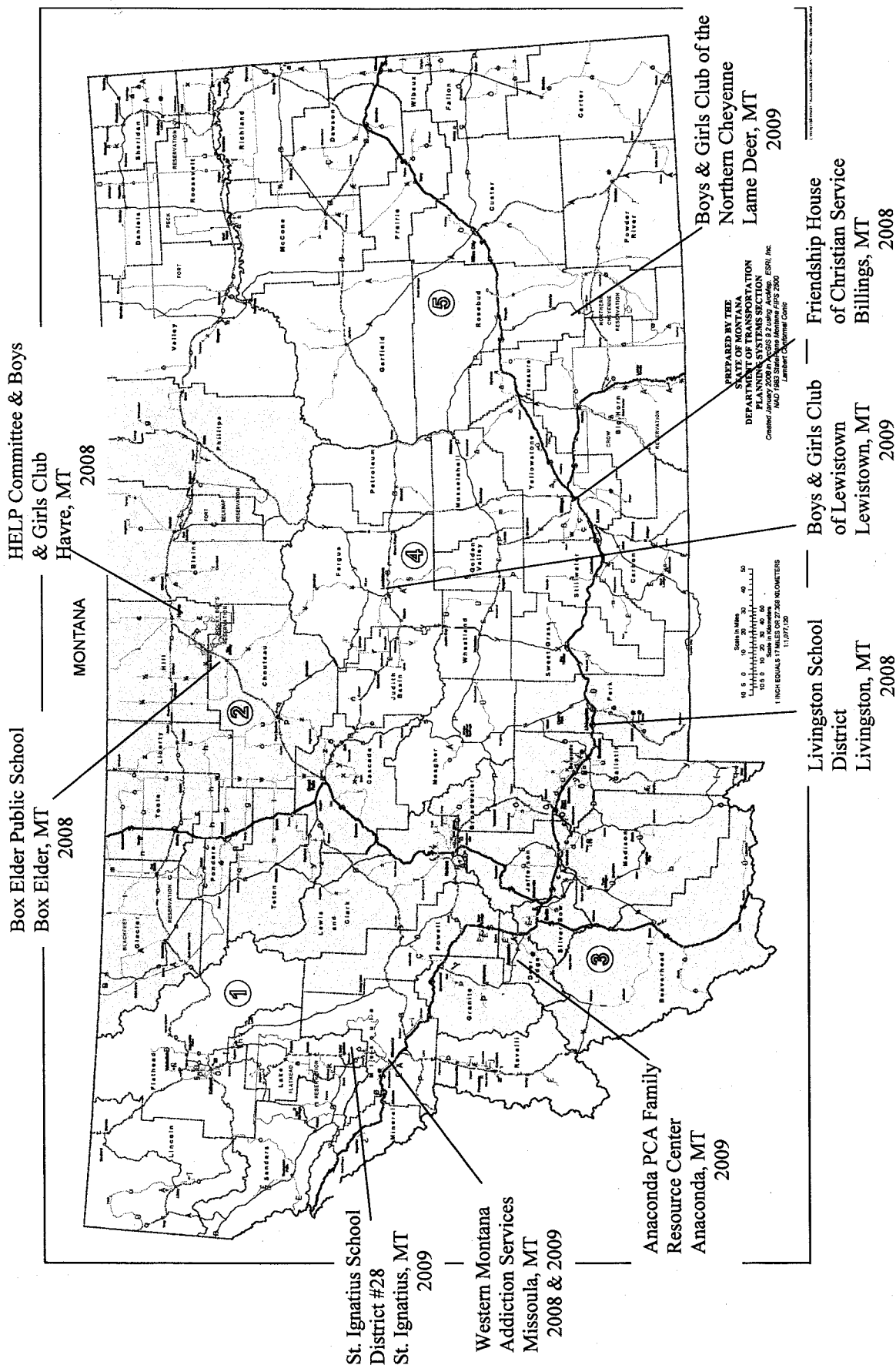
<http://www.nccic.acf.hhs.gov>.



# HB 226 Afterschool Programs

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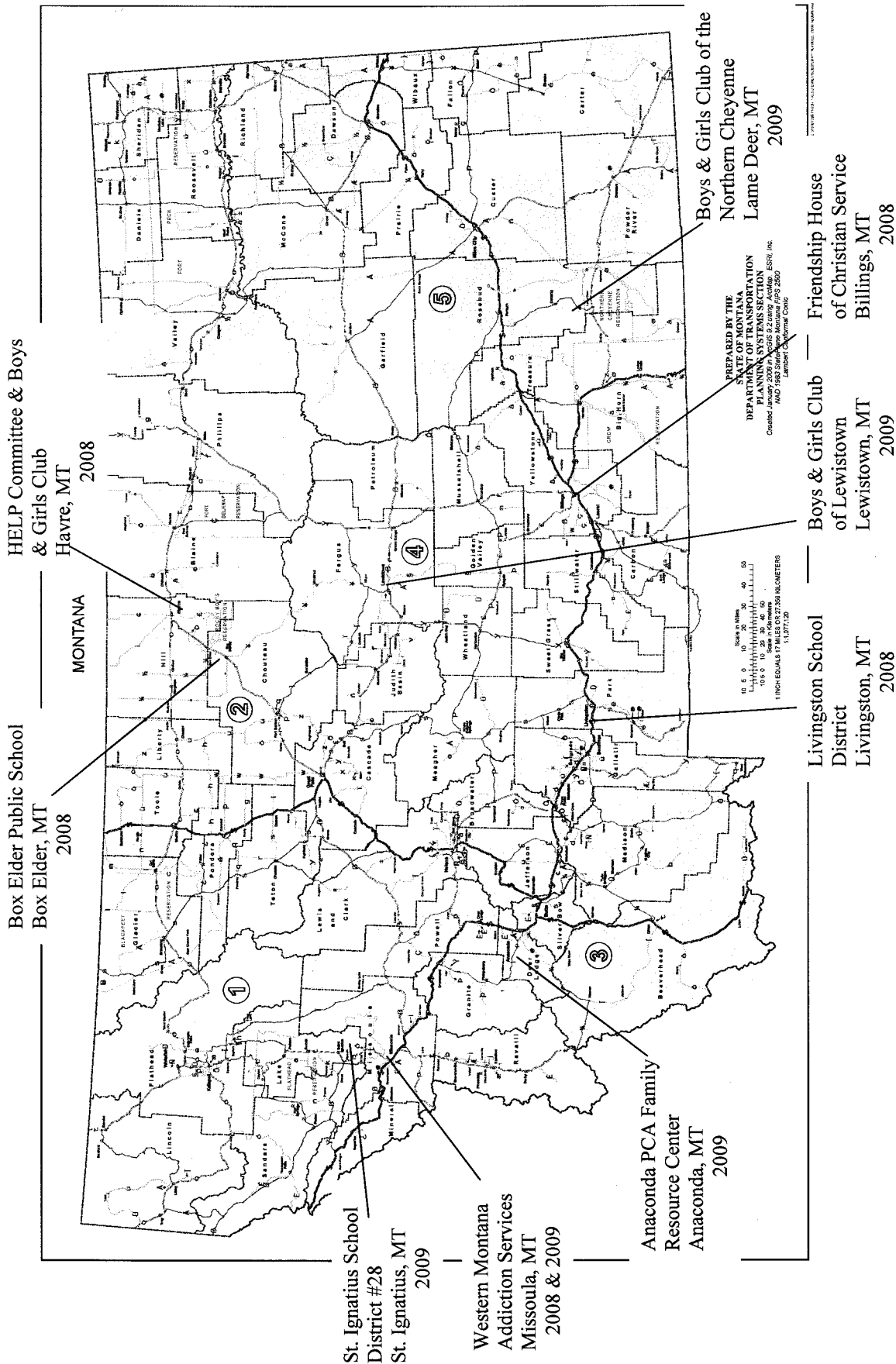


# HB 226 Afterschool Programs

EXHIBIT 1

DATE 1/20/09

HB 226



**SFY 2008 MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS**  
**HB 226**

**Western Montana Addiction Services (\$24,651)**

*Washington Middle School Flagship Program*

- ♦ Served 162 students
- ♦ Reduced absenteeism by 80%
- ♦ Increased student participation in school among 80% of participants
- ♦ Partnerships formed and developed with the University of Montana, the Missoula YWCA, the Coalition Building Institute of Missoula, Women in Transition, Eagle Mount, and the Missoula Humane Society

**HELP Committee/Boys and Girls Club of Havre (\$25,000)**

*Afterschool Program*

- ♦ Served 138 youth
- ♦ Improved or static grade point average reported by 66% of regular attendees
- ♦ Youth surveys indicate 100% satisfaction with the program
- ♦ Partnerships formed and developed with the Montana Community Change Project, the MSU Media and Theater Arts Department, and the Senior Center

**The Friendship House of Christian Service (\$25,000)**

*Afterschool Program*

- ♦ Served 85 youth
- ♦ Funding created 30 new openings for youth and developed 5 new lesson plans
- ♦ Improved prosocial behaviors, including empathy, behavior management, self-confidence, positive self-image, and appropriate response to conflict reported by 72% of regular attendees
- ♦ Partnerships formed and developed with the MSU-Billings and the Billings Out of School Time Task Force

**Box Elder Public Schools (\$25,349)**

*Afterschool Program*

- ♦ Served 172 youth
- ♦ Funding created 12 new openings for youth and developed 2 new lesson plans
- ♦ Participating high school students reported grade point average improvement from 2.09 to 2.39
- ♦ Discipline referrals were reduced by 21%

**Livingston Public Schools (\$25,000)**

*LINKS Program*

- ♦ Served 140 youth
- ♦ Funding created 30 new openings for youth
- ♦ Teacher, family, and youth surveys indicated a 90% satisfaction rate and increased homework completion rate
- ♦ Developed 5 MOUs and partnered with the local United Way campaign

**SFY 2009 MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS**  
**HB 226**

**Western Montana Addiction Services (\$10,971)**

*Washington Middle School Flagship Program*

- ♦ To date, program is serving approximately 140 youth

**St. Ignatius School District #28 (\$20,996)**

*Inside Out: Nurturing Healthy Young Lives Afterschool Program*

- ♦ To date, program is serving approximately 278 youth

**Boys and Girls Club of Lewistown (\$22,000)**

*Teen Afterschool Program*

- ♦ To date, program is serving approximately 5 youth

**Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation (\$40,820)**

*Morning Star Culture Club Afterschool Program*

- ♦ To date, program is serving approximately 40 youth

**Anaconda PCA Family Resource Center (\$26,463)**

*Donna's House Afterschool Program*

- ♦ To date, program is serving approximately 94 youth

## MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

- ♦ Every dollar spent on afterschool programs returns \$2.19 to \$3.22 to the taxpayers (Rose Institute, 2002).
- ♦ Afterschool programming reduces child care costs, crime costs, welfare costs, and increases school performance (Rose Institute, 2002).
- ♦ As many as 2.5 million parents are overstressed about afterschool time, costing businesses between \$50 billion and \$300 billion annually in lost productivity. (Evaluations Backgrounder, August 2008).
- ♦ Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country more than \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985).
- ♦ Increasing male high school graduation rates by 5% would have an annual crime-related savings of \$10,637,756; additional annual earnings of \$8,967,258; and a total benefit to Montana's economy of \$19,605,015 (Alliance for Excellent Education, August 2006).
- ♦ **Decreased worker productivity can cost American businesses up to \$300 billion per year (Brandeis University, 2006).**



**THE MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL  
AFTERSCHOOL TALKING POINTS  
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2008**

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## MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

### Relevance to Juvenile Crime

- ◆ Afterschool programs have more crime reduction potential than juvenile curfews (National Report Series, Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Violence After School [National Incident-Based Reporting System], 1999).
- ◆ Juvenile crime rises during the hours immediately after school, and kids are more likely to be victims of violent crime during those hours (National Report Series, Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Violence After School [National Incident-Based Reporting System], 1999).
- ◆ Violent crimes by juveniles peak in the afternoon between 3 and 4 p.m. A comparison of the crime patterns for school and nonschool days finds that the 3 p.m. peak occurs only on school days (National Report Series, Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Violence After School [National Incident-Based Reporting System], 1999).
- ◆ More than 1 in 7 sexual assaults by juveniles occur between 3 and 7 p.m. on school days (National Report Series, Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Violence After School [National Incident-Based Reporting System], 1999).
- ◆ Juveniles are at highest risk of being the victim of a violent crime in the four hours following the end of the school day; 19% of all juvenile violent crimes occur between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on school days (National Report Series, Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Violence After School [National Incident-Based Reporting System], 1999).
- ◆ Every dollar spent on afterschool programs returns \$2.19 to \$3.22 to the taxpayers; the benefits to crime victims range from \$4.44 to \$6.64 per dollar spent; and the benefits to individual participants range between \$2.29 and \$3.04 per dollar spent. Afterschool programming reduces child care costs, crime costs, welfare costs, and increases school performance (Rose Institute, 2002).

## MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

### Social Relevance

- ◆ Over one third (37%) of Montana's students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (Office of Public Instruction, 2007).
- ◆ Over 18% of Montana children ages 5 – 17 live in poverty (State Afterschool Profiles, 2008).
- ◆ Twenty-six percent (26%) of Montana's children live in single-parent families (Kids Count, 2008).
- ◆ One fourth (25%) of Montana's heads of household is a single parent with children ages 18 and under; 7% are father-only households, and 18% are mother-only households (Kids Count, 2008).
- ◆ Nearly three fourths (72.1%) of Montana families of children ages 6 to 17 have both parents working outside the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).
- ◆ According to the 2006 census estimates, 70% of Montana's elementary school students live in working parent households (Kids Count, 2008).
- ◆ The 2005-06 Montana Afterschool Service Capacity survey indicates that nearly one in five Montana children ages 6 to 12 with working parents attend afterschool programs.
- ◆ As many as 2.5 million parents are overstressed by parental concern about afterschool time, or PCAST; as a result, parents are less productive at work, costing businesses between \$50 billion and \$300 billion annually in lost productivity. Both men and women are vulnerable to PCAST, which potentially affects 1/3 of the US workforce (Evaluations Backgrounder, August 2008).
- ◆ According to *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*, a joint report from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, students in afterschool programs exhibit fewer behavioral problems, better ability to handle conflicts, and improved self-confidence. (After-School Programs Fact Sheet, 2001).



## MONTANA AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

### Economic Relevance

- ◆ Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country more than \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985).
- ◆ More than 70% of both college professors and employers said that recent high school graduates were unable to write clearly and had only poor or fair grammar and spelling skills (Aos and Pennucci, March 2005).
- ◆ American business currently spends more than \$60 billion each year on training, much of that on remedial reading, writing, and mathematics (The Impact of Education on the Economy, November 2003).
- ◆ Sixty percent (60%) of parents say they missed less work when their child was in an afterschool program (Policy Studies Associates, 2001).
- ◆ Every dollar invested in afterschool programs will save taxpayers approximately \$3, according to a study by the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College (Brown, et al, September 2002).
- ◆ Effective afterschool programs save between \$1.87 to \$5.29 for every \$1 spent because participants commit fewer crimes (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2001).
- ◆ A 5% increase in male high school graduation rates would have the following impact on crime reduction and earnings: an annual crime-related savings of \$10,637,756; additional annual earnings of \$8,967,258; and a total benefit to Montana's economy of \$19,605,015 (Alliance for Excellent Education, August 2006).
- ◆ Approximately 3,000 students did not graduate from Montana's high schools in 2007; the lost lifetime earnings in Montana for that class of dropouts alone are more than \$799 million (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).
- ◆ **Decreased worker productivity can cost American businesses up to \$300 billion per year (Brandeis University, 2006).**

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# *Journey with Jennifer*

## FOLLOW JENNIFER DURING HER YEAR OF SERVICE

**June 14:** I can't believe I am Miss Montana 2008! I am so humbled by this honor and look forward to serving the state throughout my year! I couldn't believe I was standing center stage holding hands with Josie Adams as the final two. When they called my name a rush of emotion flooded me and I felt like I was in a dream. It didn't seem to be real! After I took my first walk as Miss Montana I turned back to

hug my Miss Montana sisters. They are such a dynamic, talented, and real group of women and I am honored to have had the pleasure of sharing this experience with each of them! After our reunion we all were escorted to a reception in which I made my first speech and then cut the Miss Montana cake.

**June 15:** Today I was interviewed by my hometown paper, The Great Falls Tribune, about my upcoming year of service.

**June 19:** In addition to the newspaper interview I met with news correspondents from various local television stations including KRTV and Beartooth News NBC. Thank you for all your support Great Falls!

**June 27:** Today I drove to Glendive to meet with Dorothy Sturlaugson. Dorothy was kind enough to help me record promotional clips for the upcoming Miss America reality series to be aired on TLC later this year. Dorothy also interviewed me for her talk show "Let's Talk About It." I felt so honored to have had the chance to work with Dorothy!

**June 28:** As part of my time in Eastern Montana I attended the Sidney Town and Country Festival. This was the festival's debut year and I had a wonderful time interacting with the people of Sidney. To kick off the event we had a parade which marked my first parade as Miss Montana! I also got to share my talent on the Town & Country stage. After my dance performance I got to take part in an ice cream social, mingle with guests, and even do the chicken dance with a group of lively children!

**July 3:** Tonight I attended Alive @ 5 in my hometown of Great Falls, MT. I danced as a part of Red Raja Belly Dance and we had an amazing time. Alive @ 5 is held outside in Gibson Park and included a host of food vendors and local musicians. Red Raja consists of five soloists and for this event each dancer presented three dance tribal fusion belly dance pieces. We loved interacting with the audience and dancing in such a wonderful summer venue!



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**July 4:** Independence Day! This holiday means a lot to me because I am a military child. My father was in the United States Air Force and I have always been impressed by sacrifices he made for God and country. My father and the men and women of the Armed Forces have given so much to us and that is why the Fourth of July parade was a incredibly special event for me. Before the parade I had the pleasure of working with the parade committee and volunteering my services to help get the celebration going! Over breakfast I met some amazing veterans, one of which was P1C Pace. This is a photo of him and I before the parade. P1C Pace is a WWII veteran and in the picture he is seem wearing his uniform from his time of service. Thank you for your service P1C Pace!

**July 9:** Now I am off to Bozeman! I am here for Montana 4-H State Congress. This is an annual event that brings together 400 plus members of the 4-H community from all corners of the state. I had the pleasure of speaking to the participants about my platform "Beyond the Bell: Afterschool Programs for Montana's Youth." I explained highlighted the similarities between the 4 S's of afterschool (safety, studies, support, and success) and the 4 H's (health, head, heart, and hands). After my talk I presented my talent and later attended their dance where I got to lead them in the cha cha slide!

**July 12:** Today was Riverfest in Great Falls, MT. My dance group, Red Raja Belly Dance, set up a wonderful canopy that transformed the part into an Arabian fantasy! We danced twice and presented our muse themed show. Each dancer was a different muse (muse of romantic poetry, muse of dance, etc.). I loved the theme because I was the muse of tragedy which fit perfectly with my sword dance!

**July 16:** Today I kicked off my summer fair tour by performing as a part of the Gallatin County Fair in Bozeman, MT. I presented two sets, the first was American cabaret style belly dance and the second was tribal fusion style belly dance. I always enjoy presenting both styles of belly dance because they are so different and a fun contrast! I also held an autograph session and met some wonderful Montanans from the area.

**July 18:** Now I am in Montana's largest city, Billings, MT. Billings is home to the Big Sky State Games which is sporting event modeled after the Olympics. I had the opportunity to meet some of the faces behind the event at the sponsor BBQ. After dinner I presented my talent as a part of the opening ceremonies. I also had the honor of passing out metals to some of Montana's most gifted athletes!

**July 22:** Today I am in Missoula, MT for the Miss Montana's Outstanding Teen Trunk Show! I adore Missoula as it is home to the University of Montana and has been my home for the past five years. Missoula is also the hometown of Victoria Valentine, Miss Montana's Outstanding Teen 2008! Tonight Victoria showcased her wardrobe for nationals and presented her talent, the Celtic harp. I am so proud of Victoria and know that she will represent Montana with much grace and poise! Best of luck at nationals, Victoria!

**July 23:** Tonight I had the pleasure of attending the 4th of July parade awards ceremony. Weeks ago the Great Falls 4th of July parade was judged by a panel of veterans and tonight is all about giving recognition to the participants whose floats really stood out! A big thanks goes out to the team at the VFW for preparing a tasty awards banquet meal!

**July 26:** Today I am enjoying the sunshine and fair food at the Montana State Fair in Great Falls, MT. I danced with Red Raja and was even interviewed by KRTV. I even had two security guards making sure I was enjoying my time!

**July 27-Aug. 2:** This week I am off to train at the Suhaila Salimpour School of Dance. My training has taken me all the way to San Francisco! Dancing all day every day for an entire week was a nice change of pace. While at training I met wonderful dancers and worked hard on my dance technique.

**Aug. 7:** Today is Children's Miracle Network Miracle Treat Day at Dairy Queen! All the proceeds from DQ blizzards are donated the CMN today. As Miss Montana I serve as an ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network as it is the national platform for the Miss America Organization. Raising money for CMN was a lot of fun because I got to spend the day the Fox Farm Dairy Queen in Great Falls. The staff was very friendly and even taught me how to make tasty blizzard treats for customers. I passed the DQ quality control test as my blizzards were able to be turned upside down without fear! I was excited to help out and I had a great time surprising drive through customers.

After spending time at my local Dairy Queen I headed home to get ready to attend the Great Falls Voyagers baseball game. I told my dad that I was throwing the first pitch and he was quick to pick up his mitt and drag me outside for quick baseball lessons. I threw a few pitches with some success and felt better about attending the game. Once I got to the game the organization warmly welcomed me and presented me with a Voyagers jersey to wear on the field. I got to the pitcher's mound and gave it my best shot and the ball ended up closer to third base than the catcher. I laughed, smiled, and shrugged my shoulders. I turned back to the Voyager's pitcher and told him "I am here to make you guys look good!" Thanks for being great sports Voyagers!

**Aug 8:** Now I am in the hometown of the Miss Montana Scholarship Program, Glendive, MT. I had a wonderful time attending the Dawson County Fair where I was able to present a few dance pieces and interact with locals. I also got the street dance started by leading fairgoers in the cha cha slide (which is starting to become a ritual for me).

**Aug. 9:** Today I am further north in Culbertson, MT for the Roosevelt County Fair. I was honored to be a guest in their afternoon parade. After the parade I returned to the fair grounds and was greeted with amazing fair food! The locals had made lamb meatballs that were stuffed with feta cheese and they topped my fair food charts! After lunch I danced for fairgoers, signed photos, and assisted with the livestock auction.

**Aug. 10:** I am now in Montana's largest city, Billings. I began my day by meeting Miki Olszewski for coffee. Miki, the official skincare sponsor for Miss Montana, is an Arbonne consultant (<http://greenmtbeauty.myarbonne.com/>) and had a lot to tell me! Miki is a kind woman and I am so fortunate to have her assistance throughout my year. Thanks for your help Miki!

After coffee I met a fellow member of the Miss Montana family, Miss Montana 2002, Heather Rathbun-Nitz for lunch. It was nice to have a lunch with Heather as she had so much helpful advice to give me. Thanks for being my mentor Heather!

After lunch I got ready for my first night at the MontanaFair! I joined the two man band, the Bad Larrys, on the exchange patio. The Bad Larrys are talented musicians from Bigfork, MT. I enjoyed getting to know them and spending time with them throughout the fair. Montana is proud of you gentlemen! After mingling with fairgoers on the exchange patio I had the opportunity to meet Sugarland! They are a wonderful country music group and I was humbled to be in their presence. After the backstage meet and greet I got to go on stage and introduce them with Mark from KCTR.

**Aug. 11:** Today marks my second day in Billings for the MontanaFair. I began my day at Dr. Mitchell's office. Dr. Mitchell is the official chiropractor of Miss Montana. He is a wonderful doctor who helps his patients live healthier lives. Last spring we were lucky enough to have Dr. Mitchell attend our Miss Montana contestant forum and lecture on the seven keys to a healthy lifestyle. Thank you Dr. Mitchell for being such a great resource and a wonderful wellness coach! After my morning appointment with Dr. Mitchell I headed to the Advanced Laser Center. The Advanced Laser Center is owned by Miss Montana 1987, Dr. Julie Hugelen Reil. Julie is a very kind and caring person and I am so blessed to have her support. Julie is a beautiful person inside and out! Julie and the friendly staff at the Advanced Laser Center ([www.advancedlasercenterofbillings.com](http://www.advancedlasercenterofbillings.com)) are all about making you feel and look great! I was

impressed by the number and variety of services they offer! One thing in particular that excited me was laser hair removal! I look forward to my visits throughout my year of service!

Now off to the MontanaFair! I kicked off the evening by going on air with a local meteorologist. We were broadcasting live from the fair pond and had a fun time. The meteorologist asked me a few questions and I even showed him how to isolate his abdominal muscles to create a belly roll. He was a great sport and I enjoyed giving him pointers! After the local newscast I attended the beach party on reef stage. The Kahuna Brothers filled the air with beach classics and even got me to participate in a surf contest! I considered the surf contest a warm up of sorts as I later went on the dance on the community stage. Dancing was a wonderful way to close out my MontanaFair experience!

**Aug. 12:** This morning I met with Laurie Guccione, owner of Guccione Salon and Spa! Laurie has been the official cosmologist of Miss Montana for many years and has worked with numerous members of the Miss Montana family. Laurie is a sweet woman and her salon is fantastic! Thanks for all your support Laurie!

**Aug 13:** Today I am in Montana's capitol city, Helena. My platform is "Beyond the Bell: Afterschool Programs for Montana's Youth." I am dedicating my year of service as an advocate for Montana's afterschool programs. I am in Helena for the Office of Public Instruction's Community Construction conference. This conference is focused on afterschool programming and brings together educators from across the state. This conference was one of the highlights of my summer as the issue of afterschool programs is very dear to me. As a participant in the conference I was able to attend a breakout session with Mary Ellen Earnhardt entitled "Career Connection from Womb to Tomb." I enjoyed the lecture and Mary Ellen's creative ideas on how to develop a career connection in children of any age. After the breakout session I attended the closing ceremonies in which I was a guest speaker. I shared my story and explained why the "Beyond the Bell" platform is important to me. I attribute my personal success to afterschool programming and look forward to sharing my passion for afterschool with educators, parents, children, and politicians throughout my year.

**Aug 16:** Tonight we kicked off the Miss Montana Children's Miracle Network Belly Dance Benefit! The Belly Dance Benefit was at Bert and Ernie's Restaurant in Great Falls, MT. Bert and Ernie's was the perfect venue for our benefit! We transformed the stage into an Arabian palace with fabric and pillows and used a variety of props to spice up the dinner show. The Red Raja belly dancers were kind enough to donate their talents for the event and did a superb job! At intermission we had Ellen Livers from Shodair, Montana's CMN hospital, speak about the organization and its services. This event raised 504.00 dollars for the Children's Miracle Network! Thank you Red Raja and Bert and Ernie's for supporting the Children's Miracle Network! Donations are still being collected at <http://www.missamerica4kids.org/m.aspx?i=8643A58AAEB>.

**Aug. 17:** Today my family and I drove to Missoula, MT to take my sister to college. I love Missoula and the University of Montana and look forward to sharing these common bonds with my sister. We moved her into her dorm room, purchased her textbooks, and strolled around campus pointing out the buildings in which her classes will be held. The University of Montana is a special place and I wish my sister the best of luck as she begins her collegiate journey! See you during homecoming my dear!

**Aug. 19-26:** This week I am travelling in Missouri! I have enjoyed various parts of the state including Columbia, home to the University of Missouri. Columbia and MU reminded me a lot of my college town of Missoula, MT. After visiting Columbia I spent time at the beautiful Lake of the Ozarks which reminded me of Montana's majestic Flathead Lake. As you can tell I felt at home in Missouri! I am excited to to meet Miss Missouri, Lacey Fitzgerald, in Los Angeles during the taping of TLC's Miss America reality show. You represent a spectacular state Lacey!



**Aug. 27:** It feels good to be back home! Today I had the honor of speaking to the Great Falls Uptown Optimists. The Uptown Optimists are a wonderful group of citizens who are an invaluable part of the Great Falls community. They were kind enough to treat me to lunch and were very interested in learning more about my Beyond the Bell platform. Thank you for sharing my passion for Montana's youth optimists!

**Aug. 28:** Today I traveled to Missoula, MT and had my official Miss Montana photographs taken! Mark Bryant, owner of Bryant Photographics ([www.bryantphotographics.com](http://www.bryantphotographics.com)), came on board as the official photographer of Miss Montana's Outstanding Teen 2008 and Miss Montana 2008! Mark is an incredibly talented photographer and his work is incredible! Walking back into Mark's studio made me feel like I had come full circle. In 2006, the first year I competed in Miss Montana, I came to Mark for my contestant head shots. Now, two years and three state competitions later, I have returned to Mark's studio as Miss Montana! Thank you Mark and Sandra Bryant for your continued support and generosity! For those of you following my journey, here is one of my head shots from 2006. Enjoy the flashback!

**Aug. 29:** Tonight I am visiting yet another state! I am in western North Dakota for the Medora Musical! The Medora Musical is dedicated to the legacy of America's 26<sup>th</sup> President, Theodore Roosevelt. This season the musical paid tribute to Theodore Roosevelt on his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of Medora and was very excited to dance at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre! The cast was incredibly friendly. They put on a great family show full of catchy music, western dancing, fireworks, and even a battle with complete with men on horseback! The breathtaking hills and star speckled sky of North Dakota was the backdrop for the musical. I am so thrilled that Miss North Dakota, Tessie Jones, and I have the opportunity to be a part of the Medora experience. I look forward to meeting you Tessie!

**Sept 6:** Today I began my day dancing with Red Raja at the Great Falls farmer's market! I am a huge fan of Montana's farmer's markets as they showcase local produce, meats, arts, and talent! Each of the Red Raja dancers displays their own sense of style when they perform and it is so special to see! It is always a blessing to come together with these special ladies to dance. I was thrilled to be reunited with them for this performance. I danced twice during our performance. My first song was an airy veil routine whereas my second song was a high energy drum solo. After I got done dancing I visited with community members. Here I am pictured with Anna, a special girl who made my day! Thanks for your support and enthusiasm Anna!

**Sept 17-20:** This week marks my alma mater's homecoming! The University of Montana is a very special place and I am so humbled to return for this year's festivities as Miss Montana! Throughout the week I was able to participate in a variety of fun events. I was a featured student on the alumni association's House of Delegates student panel. The panel was a wonderful way for current students to communicate with alumni about what campus life is like in 2008. I always enjoy interacting with alumni because they all have such interesting stories to share!

Another great Griz tradition is the UM homecoming parade! As I was lining up for the parade Senator Max Baucus came up and said hello! I was so elated to speak to the Max as he is a true leader in our state. He was so kind to me and showed a genuine interest in my job position as Miss Montana and my preparations for Miss America. Thanks for the surprise visit Max! Best of luck with the upcoming election!

As I got in my vehicle to begin the parade I took in Missoula and felt like time stood still. I was awestruck by the beautiful the mountains and the reflection of the landscape on the Clarkfork River. Needless to say being back in Missoula as a part of the UM homecoming parade was very special and deeply emotional. The warm reception of the Missoula community moved me in a way that I cannot explain. I am so proud to have grown up in this state and to be able to call Montana home!

After the parade I attended the football game at Washington Grizzly Stadium. I even was escorted through the tailgate area on a Harley-Davidson by the preshow Harley congregation! Once I got inside the stadium I was brought back to my first time attending a Griz game. The sea of over 20,000 people still gives me shivers! I was honored to be a part of the preshow and to escort some local heroes on the field for their work with the Montana HOPE Project. The football game was wonderful and the Griz were victorious!

**Sept 21-Oct 9:** For the past three weeks I have been in the Los Angeles area filming for the TLC reality series "Miss America: Countdown to the Crown." First off, I must tell you that I signed a confidentiality agreement with TLC and can't tell you too much about the reality show as it would spoil the surprise! What I will say is that the Miss America Class of 2009 is quite remarkable. I made some wonderful friends and laughed a lot! Spending three weeks with the other state contestants was a great way to get a little piece of the entire country! Each young woman has a remarkable story and a will to better her hometown, state, and nation.

Aside from filming we were able to do a variety of fun things around the LA area! We went on a VIP tour of Warner Bros Studios and saw where your favorite TV shows are made. While on the tour we were able to walk through the Warner Bros Museum where I spotted some of the costuming and props from the movie Miss Congeniality! After the tour all of the Miss America contestants ate at the Warner Bros food court.

A number of people approached us and wondered what movie or TV show we were filming. They were pleasantly surprised to find out that we were the real deal!

One highlight of our trip to Warner Bros Studios was our appearance on the Ellen Show. I absolutely love Ellen DeGeneres! I never thought in a million years that I would have been on her show! Ellen had an ongoing quest to get George Clooney to come out of his office and used all 52 of us, along with Miss America, as bait! We had a fun time being a part of Ellen's "George Watch '08!"

Another highlight from my trip was visiting the LA Children's Hospital. As state titleholders each of us serves as an ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network. Visiting the hospital and talking to the children and their families was so rewarding. Being Miss Montana means I have the power to make an ill child's day, and that is a great privilege. I was so humbled to be a part of these children's lives if even for just a brief moment. They are truly remarkable! Thank you for sharing your afternoon with us darlings!

While in LA we also had a variety of media appearances and field trips. One day we went to the LA Zoo which quite the adventure! We also visited IHOP and promoted National Pancake Day which is set for February 24, 2009. National Pancake Day is free pancake giveaway day in which donations are collected for the Children's Miracle Network. In addition to everything else I mentioned we managed we attended a variety of sponsored lunches and even were guests on KTLA's morning show!

Filming the reality series was unlike anything I had expected. I never realized how much work went into making a television series! A lot of filming goes into producing just one hour of television. I am looking forward to seeing the final product every Friday in January and I hope you tune as well!

**Oct 11:** I am back in Montana! Today I attended the Sheridan Electric Co-Op's 61st Annual Meeting in Medicine Lake, MT. The rural electric co-ops of Montana generously support the Miss Montana Scholarship Program and it was my pleasure to be in Medicine Lake to thank them personally! I was lucky enough to tell them about my year of service and to share my talent. After the meeting we all able to socialize over a tasty luncheon. A big thank you to Jennifer Polk

for arranging my visit! I look forward to staying in contact with Sheridan Electric and to filming an advertisement for Touchstone Energy later this year!

**Oct. 13:** Now my journey has taken me to Sidney where we had a Miss America gown try-on party! With the support of the Miss Montana board and a variety of community volunteers we were able to preview a possible interview dress and 11 gowns. Among the nearly \$25,000 worth of clothing we previewed we decided on a gown that we felt was "the one!" It was nice to see the board after my extensive trip to California. I think we all felt like we had accomplished a lot in regards to Miss America wardrobe preparations. I look forward to previewing my entire wardrobe at the Miss Montana Trunk Show to be held in January prior to leaving for Miss America!

**Oct 14:** Now I am in Bozeman for my first Lights On Afterschool event. Lights On Afterschool is celebrated nationwide to call attention to the importance of afterschool programs for America's children, families, and communities. This October it is projected that 1 million Americans will celebrate Lights On Afterschool! Over the course of this month I will visit a variety of afterschool programs to celebrate this awareness event.

During my Bozeman visit for Lights On Afterschool I visited Irving Elementary and spoke to the afterschool program participants about staying involved in positive activities Beyond the Bell. Each of the kids received a Lights On Afterschool shirt that they colored and decorated. Before I knew it all the kids had lined up in an orderly fashion to have me sign their Lights On Afterschool shirts! Thanks for everything Irving Elementary!

**Oct 15:** Tonight I traveled to Billings to kick off Montana's Conference on Educational Leadership. I had the pleasure of attending the welcome reception and visiting with conference attendees from all over the state!

**Oct 16-17:** Upon leaving eastern Montana I traveled back west to Missoula for the Montana Educator's Association Conference entitled "Education; The Golden Road To Success." I networked with educators from all over the state and even attended a few seminars including: Motivating Students To Learn, Interview Skills Made Easy, It Takes Us All: Advocating for Resources, and Fresh Out Of College (tips for new teachers). I found the seminars very helpful as my entire year as Miss Montana involves speaking to Montana's youth. I will take some of those lessons with me throughout my year of as Miss Montana!

**Oct. 19-25:** Although I was only back MT for a week it is time for me to leave and return for California once again. This time my trip to California is for dance training with the renowned Suhaila Salimpour School of Dance. I always love coming back to the San Francisco area for dance because each weeklong workshop is a very special physical, mental, and spiritual journey for me. Suhaila Salimpour is an incredible dancer, choreographer, and mentor! I learned so much over the past week and was so thankful to have an entire week to refine my technique. Thank you for sponsoring my Miss America talent preparations Suhaila!

**Oct.27:** Now that I am back in Montana I am thrilled to be in Sand Coulee, MT at my second **Lights On Afterschool** event. Centerville school houses an afterschool program called LEAP (Learning Enrichment Activities Program) which serves approximately 68% of the student body. LEAP's **Lights On** event brought together program participants, politicians, educators, parents, and law enforcement officials. Everyone sat down for a tasty spaghetti dinner and had the opportunity to listen to a few LEAP participants explain why the program is important to them. We then watched a sensational video showcasing LEAP! I was honored to be in attendance and share my passion for afterschool and the "Beyond the Bell" platform. I closed out the celebration

by dancing and had a wonderful time interacting with the audience. I am looking forward to returning to LEAP in December to facilitate an afterschool enrichment class for girls!

**Oct. 28:** Today I ventured to Missoula, MT to be a part of my third *Lights On Afterschool* event! This is a special event for me as I am visiting the Washington Middle School's Flagship Program. While in college I volunteered at Washington Middle School through Flagship (an afterschool program in all of Missoula's K-12 schools). Last time I was in Washington Middle School I was an afterschool dance instructor and homework zone tutor, this time I was honored to return to Washington as Miss Montana!

As part of *Lights On* the kids wrote postcards to politicians explaining why afterschool programming is important to them. After writing postcards we all went outside and formed a big light bulb with our bodies and took a picture in celebration of *Lights On*! I then was able to speak to the kids about how my personal success is attributed to my involvement in afterschool programs. I do believe in the power of afterschool! Funding programs like Flagship ensures that Montana's kids have a safe and healthy environment to develop their talents. We need to make sure that the lights in schools are left on "Beyond the Bell" so that our children can engage in healthy activities after the school day ends.

**Oct. 30:** Now I am back in my hometown! I was a special guest at the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce luncheon and met some amazing people! Great Falls business owners, Chamber of Commerce staff, and even Montana Senator Tester were in attendance! The Chamber has a new leader as Steve Malicott recently took over as president and CEO. I was honored to be a guest in an event that marked a new chapter for the Chamber and the community of Great Falls. Welcome to Great Falls Steve!

**Oct. 31:** Halloween belly dance dinner show at the Great Falls Bert and Ernie's: After a long series of travels and appearances I am finally able to reunite with my Red Raja sisters! Tonight is Halloween and we dressed up accordingly! We performed a Dreamscapes and Nightmares Belly Dance Showcase at Bert & Ernie's and had a blast! For the first set, dreamscapes, I was a wind-up doll and was accompanied by other Red Raja dancers dressed as space travelers, bullfighters, Greek goddesses, and pirates! The second set, nightmares, was also fun as I transformed into a Halloween witch complete with my hat and broom! Trick or Treat Great Falls!

**Nov. 2-3:** Now I am in Kalispell, MT for Montana Behavioral Initiative's (MBI) Youth Days! Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) assists educators, parents, and other community members in developing the attitudes, skills, and systems necessary to ensure that each student, regardless of ability or disability, leaves public education and enters the community with social and academic

competence. Youth Days are a unique opportunity for kids from around the state of Montana to gather together to engage in leadership training, goal setting, and community service.

This year MBI's Youth Days will be held at five sites throughout Montana (Kalispell, Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, and Miles City). I am so blessed to be a guest speaker at these events! I have the privilege of sharing the state with Mac Bledsoe, an inspirational educator and father of football legend Drew Bledsoe.

Each weekend I share my story with Youth Days participants in an effort to encourage them to make safe and healthy decisions "Beyond the Bell." I also encourage them to set their goals high and to work hard to achieve them. Lastly, I explain that staying true to oneself is of utmost importance! I use my unconventional talent as an example of how we all have unique skills and special qualities that make us individuals.

As part of Youth Days the kids also participate in a Learn & Serve project. This week I took a group of kids to the Salvation Army where we helped set out Holiday merchandise throughout the store. The participants told me that they learned that community service doesn't have to be big and flashy. I couldn't agree more kids!

**Nov. 3:** After leaving Youth Days I drove to Bigfork, MT. Bigfork is home to LEAP, a local afterschool program. Upon arriving at LEAP I was surprised to see Shellie Emslie, Mrs. Montana! Shellie is an incredible woman and I was honored to have met her! She teaches at an area school and a lot of the kids at LEAP were proud to be in her class! Thanks for the surprise Shellie!

**Nov. 5:** I have been fortunate enough to be in contact with the Montana Afterschool Coalition (formerly the Montana Afterschool Network) in regards to the Montana's annual Afterschool Conference to be held this coming April. Today I had the privilege of partaking in a conference call with other afterschool providers across the state in an effort to brainstorm and plan for the upcoming conference.

**Nov. 6-8:** I am so thrilled to be in Butte, MT for the Special Olympics Basketball Tourney! Approximately 650 athletes from around the state have gathered for this exciting event! The Special Olympics is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities. The games are Olympic style events and all the athletes are winners!

I began my weekend by attending the VIP reception where I met several sponsors and staff members that make the games a success. I also met Stephen, an athlete and featured speaker during the opening ceremonies. It was great getting to know him and wish him luck before the big event. After the reception I made my way down to the gym for opening ceremonies. I got to

escort team BSW (a hometown) team in during these ceremonies. I was awestruck by the applause and positive energy that awaited us in the gym! The opening ceremonies moved me in a way that I can't explain. I almost found myself in tears. When the Olympic torch was lit everyone went wild. Let the games begin!

The next day I was able to attend some of the basketball games at the Butte Civic Center and Butte High School. I had a wonderful time visiting with athletes about their games and the tournament. Later that evening I attended the family's dinner and even closed out the night with the annual carnival and dance. I must say that next time I will have to remember to bring my dancing shoes! I was asked to dance a record number of times and had a ball with all the athletes.

The following morning the last round of games concluded and I found myself at the closing ceremonies. I reflected on my time in Butte and was sad to leave. I received a great deal of love and joy from the special Olympians, not to mention a record number of hugs! It was my honor to help award the athletes with their respective metals and wish them all congratulations. Thank you for sharing the joy of your special event with me athletes! I look forward to seeing you all at the winter games this coming February!

**Nov. 9-10:** Now I am on to my second round of MBI Youth Days! This week we are in Missoula, MT and had approximately 150 kids from around the area participate. We had a great deal of fun over the course of our two day conference. On Monday we completed a few hours of learn & serve community service at a variety of sites around Missoula. My group went to the University children's learning center and played with a preschool class. The kids were so excited to have visitors and we were thrilled to be a part of their day.

**Nov. 11:** Now I am back in eastern Montana to reconnect with the Miss Montana board of directors. We have already decided on an evening gown that we felt was "the one" and tonight we were able to have another gown try-on party to find a few gowns to have for the other nights of preliminary competition at Miss America. We had a great time and decided on two other gowns that were sensational!

In addition to meeting with the Miss Montana board, I made a special visit to SRS Crisafulli Pumps & Dredges of Glendive, MT. SRS Crisafulli is a supportive sponsor and friend of the Miss Montana Scholarship Program! I had a fun time meeting with their staff and taking some photos for the annual SRS Crisafulli calendar. Thanks for your support SRS Crisafulli! I look forward to accompanying you at the Ag Show in January!

**Nov. 12:** Today I am visiting Montana's high line! I am in Whitewater, MT doing a school visit. I had a great time visiting with both the K-6 and 7-12 kids. I had a great time sharing my passion for the "Beyond the Bell" platform as it relates to making Right Decisions Right Now!

**Nov. 14-15:** Today I am at my alma mater, Charles M. Russell High School, helping with the Electric City Speech and Debate Meet. I judged a total of 6 forty-five minute Lincoln Douglas debate rounds as that was one of my events while I was at CMR. It was nice to sit back and listen to the high school debater's arguments on whether or not felons should have the right to vote. Every debater did a stand up job and made their school proud! Have a wonderful season speech and debaters!

**Nov. 15-16:** I am back in Great Falls for the 3rd week of MBI's Youth Days! It was so nice to see approx. 200 kids from central Montana come together for the conference. Each student brought something unique to the conference. I was incredibly impressed with the service projects that each school decided to take on throughout the course of the year. Some schools are starting recycling programs while others are raising money to help communities in Africa build water filtration/purification systems. It is amazing what change Montana students can bring about! Montana has a lot to be proud of! Thank you for inspiring me MBI participants!

**Nov. 20:** Today I am spending time at the Great Falls Boy & Girls Club! I volunteered with the club when I was in high school a number of years ago. Back then I was a cheerleading coach for a club cheer squad. It was nice to come full circle with the club and revisit years later.

After school the club kids were bused to the skating rink where I got to lace up and refresh my skating skills! The kids and I had a complete blast! I signed a record number of autographs and even taught a couple of kids how to skate. As we paced around the rink I got a great arm workout as I had to hold up both kids I was holding hands with...haha! At one point I even had a child clutching onto my sash in an effort to stabilize himself (makes for a great visual doesn't it!).

Once we finished skating the Boys & Girls Club Thanksgiving dinner began! The whole gym was full of club members and their families. The kids even made me a welcome banner! The food was wonderful and the sense of community was touching. Afterschool programs like the Boys & Girls Club really do bring members of the community together!

**Nov. 23:** Now I am in Billings MetraPark for the Annual Holiday Food & Gift Festival! I had a blast speaking to the DJ's from 92.5FM! I also got to dance for shoppers which was a treat. Dr. Mitchell, the Official Chiropractor of Miss Montana, had a booth at the festival. Dr. Mitchell adjusted me which was much needed as driving across this large state has not been kind to my back! Thanks for keeping me healthy Dr. Mitchell!

**Nov. 23- 24:** This weekend is the 4th week of our MBI Youth Days tour! We are at the Crowne Plaza, the second tallest building in Montana! Much like last week, we have approx. 200 kids in attendance! The kids this week were full of energy and it was contagious! I got a lot of great feedback from the kids about my presentation and how much my story meant to them. I am so honored to be in a position where I can share my challenges, successes, and advice with younger kids.

On Monday I went to the Blair Family Boys & Girls Club with a group of MBI students. Our learn and service project was to clean up the club. We cleaned windows, disinfected play areas, and picked up trash outside. We accomplished a lot and were happy to help out a positive place for kids!

**Nov. 25:** Today I had the pleasure of being a guest at Castle Rock Middle School's pep assembly! Castle Rock is a school in the Billings heights. Over the course of the past month I have been working with a wonderful team of consultants for Montana Behavioral Initiative's Youth Days. Randy Chase and Megan Parish are both Youth Days consultants and teachers at Castle Rock! I was excited to see the school community that they are a part of at Castle Rock. The pep assembly reflected this sense of community. The air was filled with catchy tunes that the pep band was playing and the entire gym was filled with energy. When it was my turn to speak I found myself looking up to a sea of 650 middle school students. They were incredibly respectful and welcoming. Towards the end of my talk the bell rang and not one student stood up. The entire gym calmly waited for me to wrap up my speech! I was so impressed! The students at Castle Rock are such leaders! You have a lot to be proud of Castle Rock! I will proudly sport my Castle Rock student of the month shirt throughout the year!

After school I paid a visit to the Castle Rock Boys & Girls Club program. I was able to share my "Beyond the Bell" story and talk about the 4 S's of afterschool (Safety, Studies, Support & Success).

**Nov. 26:** Today I was able to reconnect with a dear friend of mine! Courtney Gifford, Miss Wyoming 2008, became friends during the fall filming of TLC's "Countdown to the Crown" (a series to begin airing January 2nd). Courtney and I have stayed in touch over the past few months but today was the first time we have been able to visit one another since the reality series filming. Courtney hails from Sheridan, WY which is approx. 2 hours south of Billings, MT. While in Billings Courtney and I recounted our trip to LA, updated one another on our latest events, and giggled about all the memories to come! I am so blessed to have Courtney as a friend. She is as genuine as they come! I hope to be visiting royalty at her state pageant this coming summer! Good luck with your Miss America prep Courtney and see you in Vegas!

**Nov. 27:** Thanksgiving! Today is a day where I am lucky enough to be back home in Great Falls, MT. I enjoyed a tasty meal with my family and thought about all the things that I have been blessed with. I am one lucky young lady! Thank you to everyone for your encouragement and support. Being able to serve the great state of Montana as Miss Montana is truly something to be thankful for!

**Dec. 2:** Today I am returning to Centerville, MT to visit LEAP (Learning Enrichment Activities Program), an afterschool program, for the second time. My first LEAP visit was in October when we were celebrating Lights On Afterschool, a national awareness building event to promote afterschool programs. This visit I was fortunate enough to lead an enrichment seminar afterschool. I spoke to some of LEAP's female participants about the meaning of sisterhood. Women should love themselves and love one another. Growing up I was on the cheer squad and in college I lived in a sorority. I believe that these experiences called me to be a good sister. The Miss Montana Scholarship Program is also a sisterhood that I am a part of. The LEAP participants were very receptive to the idea that we, as women, should strive for cooperation over competition. The sisterhood seminar was a success as our group had a series of meaningful conversations about the meaning of sisterhood. Thank you for sharing the afternoon with me ladies!

**Dec. 5:** Tonight is the official beginning of Christmas season! I was excited and honored to attend the Malmstrom Air Force Base tree lighting event. I had a ball riding into the event on a fire truck with Santa Claus! Upon arriving at the ceremony I had the pleasure of meeting the base commander, Col. Mike Fortney.



After the tree was lit I quickly rushed off to the Great Falls Christmas Stroll. Downtown Great Falls was decorated beautifully for the event! The smell of holiday treats filled the air, holiday lights lit the sky, and everything looked so magical! I, along with the Red Raja dancers, celebrated the holidays by performing to seasonal music. Red and gold poinsettias adorned my hair and hung from my belt as I presented a improvisational drum solo. This event was extra special because we had our very own live drummer, the talented Mr. James Hayes!

**Dec. 7- 8:** This weekend is the 5th and final round of Montana Behavioral Initiative's Youth Days! We are in eastern Montana working with student leaders around the Miles City area. This conference was very meaningful because it marked the end of a wonderful month long tour with MBI. The kids were incredibly engaged and all had innovative community service project ideas. I know that these student leaders will go back to their school and put the ideas that were generated at the MBI conference into action. The Miles City group, along with all other 4 site attendees, will surely carry out this year's Youth Days theme of "Walking the Talk!"

**Dec. 9:** Today I am further east in Glendive, MT for a variety of appointments. I kicked off my Glendive visit by filming my second visit on *Dorothy Sturlaugson's* "Let's Talk About It." Dorothy owns The Right Impression Photography and is a supporter of the Miss Montana Program. After the interview Dorothy and I visited nine sponsors that generously support the Miss Montana Scholarship Program. Today was a photo op for each of these philanthropic donors as the Miss Montana program book displays photos of sponsors with Miss MT. It was nice to be able to personally thank them for helping make the Miss Montana Scholarship Program the success that it is.

After finishing a good number of sponsor photos I headed to Dr. Eickmann's office to be fitted for teeth whitening trays. Thank you for helping me obtain a million dollar smile Dr. Eickmann! Once I got done with my dental appointment I met with Jan Holden and Barb Schmaus to review wardrobe alterations for my Miss America wardrobe. We accomplished so much and I was relieved to see that all my clothing would be altered to fit me perfectly! Thanks for the hours of pinning, examining, and re-pinning ladies!

**Dec. 10:** Today marks my second day in Glendive. I had the pleasure of attending the Glendive Zonta Club's luncheon where I got to talk about my adventures as Miss Montana. Zonta is a group dedicated to advancing the status of women. During the luncheon I heard about the wonderful holiday projects the local Zonta group had planned. They will make the holidays much brighter for some Glendive families!

After lunch I met with Jim Squires and the Glendive Toastmasters for interview practice. I found our hour long mock interview session to be incredibly helpful. I look forward to developing my interview skills even further with my interview coach Valerie Hayes.

Upon concluding interview practice we filmed a "get to know Miss Montana" segment for TLC. This video will be available for viewing in January during the airing of the "Countdown to the Crown" reality series.



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